

Amendment to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. – 5. (canceled)

6. (previously presented) A schedule management system, comprising:
a schedule server which stores the schedules of participants and schedules of equipments reserved by ones of said participants in different groups; and
a plurality of remote client devices operatively connected to said schedule server, which allow client users to input schedules of said participants and request an idle time retrieval from said schedule server,
wherein said schedule server comprises a communication controller which provides a visual display of said idle time retrieval at selected ones of said client devices.

7. (previously presented) A schedule management system according to claim 6, wherein said selected client device indicates result of said idle time retrieval.

8. (new) A mutlistageous idle-time retrieving method comprising the steps of:

comparing a first retrieval condition specifying a time zone with schedules of respective members belonging to a first group to extract idle-times of the respective members belonging to the first group;

extracting idle-time common to the extracted idle-times of the respective members belonging to the first group and setting the common idle-time as a second retrieval condition;

comparing the second retrieval condition with schedules of respective members belonging to a second group to extract idle-times of the respective members belonging to the second group;

extracting idle-time common to the extracted idle-times of the respective members belonging to the second group and setting the common idle-time as a third retrieval condition; and

displaying the third retrieval condition on a display apparatus.

9. (new) A multistageous idle-time retrieving apparatus comprising:

means for comparing a first retrieval condition specifying a time zone with schedules of respective members belonging to a first group to extract idle-time of the respective members belonging to the first group;

means for extracting idle-time common to the extracted idle-times of the respective members belonging to the first group and setting the common idle-time as a second retrieval condition;

means for comparing the second retrieval condition with schedules of respective members belonging to a second group to extract idle-times of the respective members belonging to the second group;

means for extracting idle-time common to the extracted idle-times of the respective members belonging to the second group and setting the common idle-time as a third retrieval condition; and

means for displaying the third retrieval condition on a display apparatus.